



Phil Frier completes a trek to Everest Base Camp

This is what a man under pressure looks like

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National Audit Office overload warning for EFA



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Shock funding cut for 1,500 adult quals

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Warning of 'serious implications' over 15-credit threshold

As many as 1,500 qualifications face the public funding axe as the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) looks to introduce a 15-credit threshold.

The SFA has published a list of 1,477 Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) level two to four qualifications which it says will not be approved for funding in 2014/15.

It aims to make funding only available to qualifications of at least 15 credits (one credit equates to 10 hours' learning), despite draft proposals late last year in which qualifications had to be of at least 12 credits. The change means that certificates — not just lower-credit awards — will be hit.

Jill Lanning, Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) chief executive, said: "We are naturally concerned that the new rules and the resultant significant reduction in the number of qualifications eligible for public funding will have serious implications for

awarding bodies but also for the breath of the offer available to providers and learners.

"FAB will continue to represent its members' views in our on-going discussions with the Skills Funding Agency as the implications of these changes become clearer."

The move comes after a review by BAE Systems group managing director Nigel Whitehead late last year, in which he suggested 95 per cent of the adult vocational market's 19,000-plus qualifications could be axed in a bid to "de-clutter the system".

Nevertheless, 15-credit announcement came via a statement on the SFA website while the sector awaits the Skills Funding Statement.

It said on the SFA website: "This is a list of QCF qualifications from level two to four approved for funding for 2013/14 but which do not meet the new size business rule of 15 credits for level two to four qualifications, and are therefore not approved for 2014/15.

"Awarding organisations may notify that

they wish the agency to consider funding a qualification below 15 credits."

Among the awarding organisations with qualifications named in the list is apt awards, which has seven qualifications on the list.

Chief executive Christine Bullock said she had a team analysing the impact the cull would have.

She said: "It is something we were aware of and we are analysing the document as we speak."

City & Guilds has 289 qualifications at risk. A spokesperson said: "We will look into the information further and work with the SFA accordingly."

It comes after a cull of more than 1,800 adult qualifications that had little or no uptake was reported by FE Week last September. The SFA axed the funding for a host of awards, from entry level to level four, as part of its New Streamlined Funding System for Adult Skills in August.

Among the qualifications hit were City &

Guilds' level one award in creative techniques in jewellery — personalised key fob and the Royal Society for Public Health's level two award in health promotion.

Ms Lanning, from FAB, said: "The SFA outlined its thinking [on latest cull] to our members at a couple of forums last Autumn which did indicate restrictions on funding based on the size of qualifications so our members have waiting to see what this would mean in practice.

"It is no secret that public funding and therefore the SFA's budget is being squeezed and they have been developing their new approach over the past few months."

She added: "Our members will now be working through this very detailed document to understand what it means for them.

"It is important to remember that a significant number of qualifications are already taken by learners who finance themselves or are supported by their employers."

See editor's comment on page 6

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- 

@KatieSchmuecker
34 per cent of employers don’t offer training why not? Cost and time the biggest barriers
- 

@Will_Brompton
not surprised, graduate engineer starting salary £32k, not enough graduates; must #inspirethefuture!
- 

@VikiFaulkner
Proportion of staff trained has risen substantially (great) but staff are getting fewer days of training and investment decreasing
- 

@EEF_Economists
First question: facing skills shortages in engineering so time to get more women into engineering-big @bisgovuk to make this happen
- 

@Reemalhotra
Skills underpin EVERYTHING - eg. to build affordable housing and tackle poverty & inequality, we need good engineers

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Concerns over nuclear college plans

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Plans for a new college to train nuclear power plant workers have sparked concerns among colleges who had been hoping to deliver training for the industry themselves.

Skills Minister Matthew Hancock was at the PoliticsHome Skills Summit in London on Tuesday (January 28) when he announced the proposals. He said the new college could “provide the specialist, advanced skills” for the nuclear industry.

A spokesperson for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) later told FE Week the location of the new college had not been “established”.

The announcement caused raised eyebrows at Bridgwater College, in Somerset, where principal Mike Robbins has spent the last three years planning for and developing training facilities and courses for workers set to help build a new nuclear power station at nearby Hinkley Point by 2023.

Mr Robbins told FE Week: “We are awaiting further details, but would hope to play as full a part in any discussions as possible. We have invested much of our own time, effort and resources in preparing for the new nuclear build on our doorstep and in developing plans with contractors and other colleges and training providers in the region to meet the skills and training needs of the project.”

Another provider that could be affected by the plans is South Gloucestershire & Stroud College. It has submitted proposals with local enterprise partnership gfirst (Growing Gloucestershire) to develop a renewable energy, engineering and nuclear skills training centre at the decommissioned

Berkeley power station, in Gloucestershire.

A spokesperson for the college declined to comment on whether its plans could be undermined by the proposed nuclear college.

Mr Hancock’s announcement came just weeks after the government unveiled proposals to create a new college, the first since colleges were incorporated in 1993, to support the engineering skills needed for the new HS2 rail project.

He said he wanted it to be an “elite centre” like the nuclear college.

“In the next 20 years, some £930bn will be spent across the world on new nuclear reactors — and £250bn on decommissioning old ones. In Britain alone, 40,000 jobs could be created,” said Mr Hancock.

“So the new college will build on the industry’s work — and provide the specialist, advanced skills to meet that demand — and then sell that expertise to the world.”

Bridgwater College has already invested more than £2m of its own money on its scheme and attracted millions more from outside organisations. Among the investors was French firm EDF Energy, which will build the new facility. Its managing director, Humphrey Cadoux-Hudson, was quoted in a BIS press release on the new nuclear college plans announced by Mr Hancock.

Mr Robbins said: “Although many of our programmes, qualifications and facilities have been designed to meet local demand, some are designed to meet industry needs on a national scale, and it wouldn’t make sense to replicate them. The extent to which a new national nuclear college would impact on this work would therefore largely depend on its intended purpose, how it will operate and where it is located.”

See Mr Robbins’ expert piece on page 10

Software problems ‘distorting’ key statistics

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Key information designed to “hold the government to account over delivery of policy” has been corrupted by ongoing problems with new funding software.

The latest Statistical First Release (SFR), out on Thursday, January 30, included a host of important information based on providers’ data.

However, they’ve struggled to submit learner numbers, course details and other key information because of ongoing troubles with new Skills Funding Agency (SFA) software.

And now the problems are affecting the SFR, which acknowledged issues with a note: “There is evidence of increased data lag for the first three months of 2013/14 compared to the same period of the previous year.”

Among the statistics most affected by the software problem appears to have been provisional data on the number of apprenticeship starts for the first quarter (August to October) of the current academic year.

They showed an unexpected 19 per cent drop for intermediate level apprenticeships (which are not subject to FE loans). There were 90,800 starts during the first quarter of 2012/13 (according to provisional figures published in

January last year), compared to just 73,500 during the same period in 2013/14.

Stephen Hewitt, Morley College’s strategic funding, enrolments and examinations manager, said: “The problems with the new funding software are clearly starting to distort the FE figures, as shown in the SFR.

“Providers will obviously do our best to get the figures right for the next round of figures, but this is likely to continue for the next few months.”

Lindsay McCurdy, from Apprenticeships4England, said: “The software is not fit for purpose at the present time and is obviously contorting the figures, which you can clearly see with intermediate level apprenticeship starts. Urgent action is need to rectify these problems.”

A spokesperson for the SFA and BIS admitted there had been “data collection issues” affecting the “validity” of the SFR. However, he declined to comment further on the cause of the SFR problem. Nor did he comment on what actions BIS or the SFA was taking to rectify the software situation.

A statement explaining the importance of the SFR on the Data Service website states: “Its aim is to present the performance of the FE system, and to hold the government to account over delivery of policy.”

Shadow skills minister Liam Byrne said:

FE Week news in brief Skills conference

Apprenticeship providers looking to expand overseas have been invited to a Skills Funding Agency conference in March.

It is set to feature FE and skills sector speakers, covering worldwide trends in vocational education.

The event takes place in London during National Apprenticeship Week on Friday, March 7 and is free to attend for any agency-funded apprenticeship provider.

Email Ingrid.fischer@apprenticeships.gov.uk for more details.

Certification rejected

Skills Minister Matthew Hancock has rejected a national work readiness certification scheme for young people.

Replying to a written ministerial question from Labour’s Ann McKechin MP, Mr Hancock said: “The issue of work readiness is already being addressed through the introduction of traineeships and the publication of approved lists of qualifications recognised by employers as leading to an occupation.”

He added more tech levels would be published later this year.

DfE work experience

The government has revealed that 107 people have undertaken work experience at the Department for Education (DfE) since 2010.

Across financial years 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13, DfE also took on 44 apprentices.

And in this financial year, DfE employed 15 apprentices from the Civil Service Apprenticeship Scheme, taking on another 15 in September.

Since 2011, 19 Cabinet Office and the White-hall paid interns and three expenses-only Cabinet Office’s interns have worked in DfE.

“The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [BIS] is bringing the same shambolic approach we saw in student finance to collecting figures for apprentices — this can’t go on.

“Ministers must come clean and tell us the full extent of these ‘data collection issues’, what they estimate the genuine figures are and what they’re doing to ensure this never happens again.”

The SFA and Data Service’s new Funding Information System (Fis) software is behind providers’ data submission headache.

It should have been available in August last year, but was not released until November — and providers say it is still giving unreliable funding data reports.

The government’s Learning Aim Reference System (Lars) online search engine should also have been available by last August.

It is supposed to help providers’ management information system (MIS) officers check whether qualifications are eligible for funding, and how much per learner providers should receive.

However, it is still not available and providers are having to use Lars Lite instead — a temporary downloadable database from the SFA that providers claim is also producing unreliable data.

The Association of Colleges and 157 Group declined to comment.

Ex-Cabinet Secretaries wade in on 18 funding cut debate

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Two former education and skills secretaries joined the charge against a controversial funding cut for 18-year-old learners as Skills Minister Matthew Hancock was grilled by MPs in a special debate on the issue.

Former Education Secretary David Blunkett (pictured left) and former Skills Secretary John Denham (pictured right) joined the Westminster Hall debate over plans to cut the full-time education funding rate for 18-year-olds by 17.5 per cent on Tuesday.

The Department for Education has faced criticism over the proposed cut and an impact assessment behind it.

Mr Denham, who held the now-defunct Skills Secretary for two years post under Prime Minister Gordon Brown, said: “It is not entirely clear, now that these students are going to be funded by about £700 a-year less than other students, whether the minister thinks that colleges should continue to support these students in their third year to the same quality of education despite not having the money — or whether the minister wants these colleges only to offer these students two years of education?

“The consequence of this decision is to

concentrate the cuts on a sub-set of colleges, and in particular that is those colleges which are in areas with historically weaker school performance because those areas will throw out more able students who require a third year to get to level three or A-level. It has the effect of concentrating the cut on areas with a higher than average level of deprivation.”

During the debate, several MPs questioned why the impact assessment had taken so long to be released. It showed that FE colleges will be among the worst-hit of all institutions — with an average reduction in funding of 3 per cent.

For land-based colleges it’s 2.5 per cent, for commercial and charitable providers it’s 1.5 per cent, and for sixth form colleges it’s 1.2 per cent.

But for school sixth forms it’s just 0.4 per cent. However, the report does not say how much cash the funding rate cut, due next academic year, is expected to save. The Association of Colleges is among those to have objected to the cut, estimating that it could save the government £150m.

And Mr Blunkett, who was Education and Employment Secretary for four years under Prime Minister Tony Blair, said the impact assessment had concerned colleges in his Sheffield constituency.

Former provider staff due in court on host of fraud charges

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More than a dozen former employees of welfare to work provider A4e are due to appear in court charged with fraud.

The eight women and five men are due at Reading Crown Court on Monday, February 3, for a plea and case management hearing.

They face allegations including conspiracy to defraud, making a false instrument and supplying articles for use in fraud, dating from February 2009.

It is alleged they forged documentation to support fraudulent claims for reward payments from the Department for Work and Pensions under the Aspire to Inspire programme, which ended in 2011.

A Crown Prosecution Service spokesperson said: “Under the terms of the contract, payments were made when the scheme successfully placed individuals in employment.

“It is alleged that many of the reward payments related either to people who never attended A4e or to clients whom A4e had not successfully placed in employment. The contract was to deliver motivation and training and to assist people to find employment.”

The case comes amid revelations that A4e, one of the UK’s largest welfare to work

providers, suffered an £11.5m pre-tax loss last year.

Company accounts also show revenues fell by 14 per cent to £167.1m in the 12 months to last March.

And the company owes £17m to the Co-operative Bank and the Royal Bank of Scotland, and has extended the loan until the end of 2015.

Company owner Emma Harrison resigned as chairwoman and also gave up her role as Prime Minister David Cameron’s back-to-work tsar following the fraud allegations.

Ms Harrison, who still owns 85 per cent of the company, has not been accused of any wrongdoing.

Account manager Ines Cano-Uribe, aged 37, of Madrid, Spain, and administrator Zahar Khalil, 34, of Dolphin Road, Slough, are charged with 55 counts of making false instruments, one count of conspiracy to cheat and defraud, two counts of making and supplying articles for use in fraud and two counts of possessing and controlling articles for use in fraud.

They are joined by recruiters Charles McDonald, 43, of Derwent Road, Egham, Nikki Foster, of High Tree Drive, Reading and Aditi Sigh, of Elmshott Lane, Slough, both 30, and Julie Grimes, 51, of Monks Way, Staines.

Bindiya Dholiwar, 27, of Reddington Drive, Slough, Dean Lloyd, 37, of Rochfords, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, and Yasmin Ahmed, 39,



He said: “Sheffield College and Sheffield Longley Park Sixth Form College are somewhat bewildered as to who could possibly have undertaken an impact assessment that so grievously missed the point of what it is going to do to young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.”

Labour MP Kate Green, who organised the debate, raised further concerns about the impact the funding rate cut would have before Mr Hancock defended the cut in response to Shadow Junior Education Minister Rushanara Ali.



She had described the way the decision had been made as “reckless and irresponsible”.

Mr Hancock said: “We are faced with a cut across the government to make savings to reach the goals we have to reduce budget deficit.

“It is difficult being a minister when there’s no money left, but we all know whose fault that is.”

He told MPs that the reduction would take funding for 18-year-olds back to 2012/13 levels, but he admitted the decision to target older learners “wasn’t easy”.

Learner support after closure blow

College leaders and employers are still working with the government to resolve issues caused by the closure of a training restaurant in Plymouth.

The Restaurant Academy closed on January 17, and its parent company Synergy Training South West is said to be meeting with creditors over its future.

The closure of the restaurant left two apprentices from K College, and 15 from Sussex Coast College Hastings effectively out of work.

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and City College Plymouth, which has its own training restaurant, are attempting to contact the 17 affected learners to continue their training.

A Sussex Coast College spokesperson said: “As a result of the Restaurant Academy closing, 15 learners were made redundant.”

He added: “We are working with City College Plymouth to support and help those affected by the situation.”

Despite repeated attempts to contact Synergy Training, FE Week phone calls to its Devon headquarters went unanswered. The Companies Check website lists the organisation’s status as “meeting of creditors”.

A K College spokesperson said: “Since the restaurant closed we’ve spoken directly to our apprentices, the SFA and City College Plymouth to secure and protect our learners and help them to complete their qualifications.”



of Colchester Road, of Southend on Sea, are also charged.

They were charged in September, and a further charge against Cano-Uribe and four more defendants was announced in December.

Cano-Uribe was also charged with one count conspiracy to make false instruments. The same charge was put to quality co-ordinator Sarah Hawkins, 31, of Bagshot, Surrey, operations manager Serge Wyatt, 39, of Richmond, team leader Matthew Hannigan-Train, 29, of Bristol and recruiter Hayley Wilson, 26, of Springfield in Milton Keynes.

They were also due to appear in court this week.

An A4e spokesperson said: “The alleged incidents all relate to old paper-based contracts which used systems that have since been replaced.

“We are fully co-operating with the police to ensure the investigation can be concluded quickly and are therefore unable to comment further on an ongoing enquiry.”

[Proceeding]

Fraction of FE loans paid out for apprenticeships

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Just a fraction of the 25,200 FE loans taken out between August and October last year were for apprenticeships, government figures have revealed.

The Statistical First Release (SFR) on Thursday, January 30, showed that less than 0.4 per cent (100) of the loans paid out to learners over 24 were given to apprentices.

And, taking on board application figures for the period, just one-in-four apprentice applicants took out a loan.

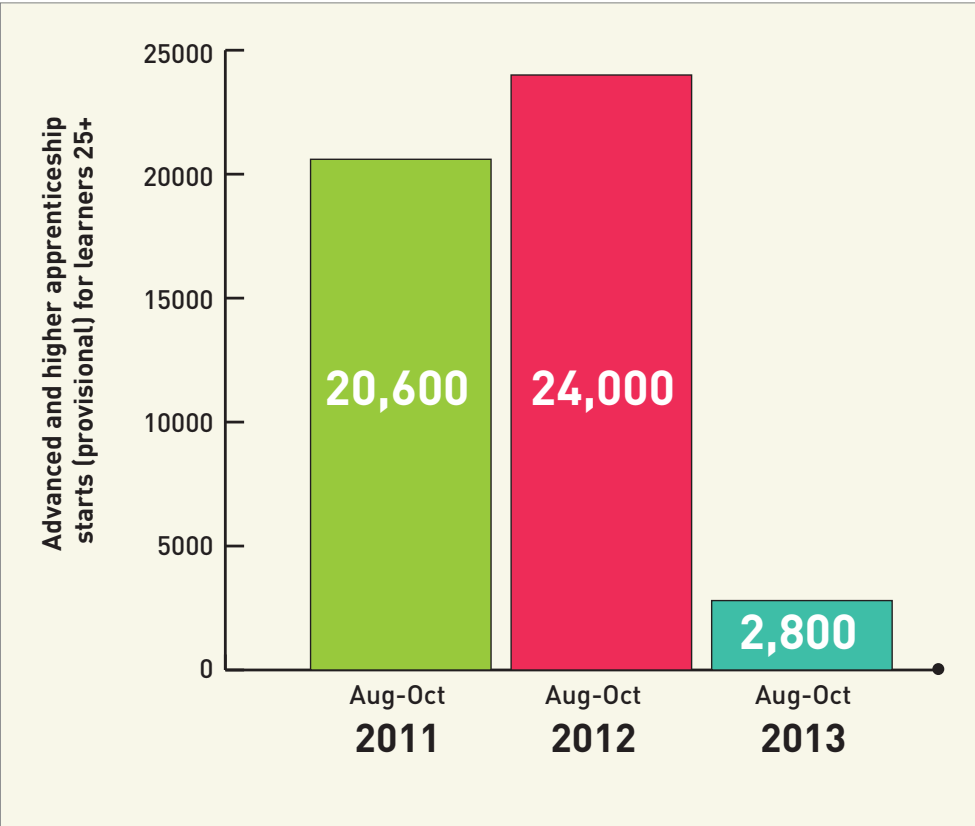
But the SFR, which for the first time shows FE loans uptake, contained further damning figures for the FE apprentice loan system.

Its provisional data showed that 2,800 people aged 25 or over started an advanced or higher level apprenticeship between August and October.

The figures compare to the provisional number of 24,000 in the same period in 2012 — a fall of more than 88 per cent.



It has reinforced the view among sector leaders that extending the scheme to apprentices was a mistake and comes



just over a month after Business Secretary Vince Cable told *FE Week* that apprentice FE loans were being scrapped.

However, they continue to be processed by the Student Loans Company.

David Hughes, National Institute for Adult Continuing Education chief executive, said: “We have always had concerns about this policy and it quickly became evident that it was not working.

“This has been highlighted today by the substantial fall in the number of people, aged 25 and over, who are on advanced and higher level apprenticeships.

“These provisional figures are just 12 per cent of those reported at this level last year.

“We are pleased the government has decided to scrap loans for advanced and higher level apprenticeships, but we are anxious to see what will replace them.

Case studies highlight workplace relevance

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Ofsted and the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) have teamed up to share examples of good practice in vocational teaching and learning with a new set of case studies.

Ten best practice examples, in which workplace-relevant skills were key, were released having been handpicked by a panel of experts, including members from the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL), Ofsted, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and London’s Institute of Education.

Among the case studies are successes in theatrical, special effects, hair and media make-up training at Leeds City College and hospitality and catering at Exeter College’s Michael Caines Academy.

They were compiled in response to a CAVTL report, called “It’s about work”, which focused on excellent vocational teaching and learning and identified underpinning design and delivery processes.

Leeds City College principal Peter Roberts said: “We are delighted to have been selected to be included in this best practice showcase.

“We work hard to achieve the best possible outcomes for our learners and we hope that by reaching a wider audience this example helps others to achieve similar results.”

Exeter College head of hospitality and



Michael Caine with students

catering Tricia Pugsley said: “The students not only gain vocational skills from this training, but because of the way we work with employers and industry they come away with a clearer understanding of the skills needed for the work place and a genuinely more visible route into employment.”

Ofsted director of FE and skills Matthew Coffey said: “We were keen to trial an innovative approach to identifying good practice case studies and we have been pleased to work with CAVTL and the ETF on the development of these case studies.

“I would encourage vocational teachers, trainers and leaders in all types of providers to take a look at the case studies and the practical resources they include, and to consider how they might adapt them to their own contexts.”

Frank McLoughlin, CAVTL chair and Leeds City College principal, said: “We greatly appreciated Ofsted’s interest in further exploring some of the key dimensions of excellent vocational teaching and learning.

“I hope these case studies will shine a light on some of the genuinely world-class provision within our vocational education and training system, and encourage us all

to learn with and from each other as we continue to raise the status and improve the quality and impact of vocational teaching and learning.”

David Russell, ETF chief executive, said: “Our role is to enhance the professionalism of the education and training workforce. Enabling colleagues to learn from each other’s practice is at the heart of our approach.

“We are delighted to be working with Ofsted, sector partners and the organisations showcased in this publication. Sharing widely great examples of excellent and innovative practice is a simple but effective way we will help the sector to improve outcomes for learners and employers.”

Visit the *FE Week* website for the full list of case studies, including links to each publication.

“We need clarity on the funding arrangements so that more people over 24 will be able to take advantage of the opportunities these apprenticeships offer.”

A spokesperson at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills declined to answer questions about the fall in 25+ apprentice numbers or comment the possibility it was linked to the loans debacle.

He said: “These are provisional figures and we have had some data collection issues which affects the validity and makes it difficult to draw conclusions.

“It is important to know that we will have fuller and more accurate data at the end of the year.”

He was also unable to confirm when loans would stop being processed for apprentices.

The SFR figures came the same day as monthly FE loan application numbers were published.

They showed that of the 2,021 loan application made in December, just 162 were for apprenticeships.

It means the total number of application since the scheme started in April was 57,205 — of which 695, or 1.2 per cent, were for apprenticeships.

National Union of Students president Toni Pearce said: “Asking adults to pay up to £4,000 a year to study for A-levels, BTecs and even to work as apprentices was always the wrong way to go, and hugely unfair to people who want to study or re-skill later in life.

“Such sky-high fees are clearly a major deterrent for many adults who wish to study in further education.”

Worries over HMRC funding proposal

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) has raised concerns over the government’s proposals to direct funding for apprenticeships straight to employers.

Chancellor George Osborne, in the Autumn statement, said a new funding model would use Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) systems to route funding directly to employers.

And AELP’s position paper for an upcoming government technical review on the proposals was seen by *FE Week*.

Stewart Segal, AELP chief executive, said: “The government’s proposal on funding could potentially create a barrier for small and medium-sized enterprises.

“The majority of apprentices are in a workplace with only one or two other apprentices so to put in all that infrastructure is a lot for just two learners.”

The document also expresses concerns about whether the government would contribute to funding for 17 and 18-year-olds.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) consulted on apprenticeships funding last year following the Doug Richard Review which recommended greater employer ownership of the apprenticeship system.

A BIS spokesperson could not say when the technical consultation would be launched.

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Editor’s comment

Skills Funding Statement leakage?

The Skills Funding Agency said in its weekly update that it could not announce funding rules for next year until BIS published the now well overdue annual Skills Funding Statement (SFS).

It might therefore come as a surprise to learn that on the same day the agency said this, it announced a significant funding rule anyway.

The new rule states level two, three or four qualifications below 15 QCF credits will no longer be funded.

Could it be the SFA could not wait any longer, and the SFS information blockage is starting to leak?

Providers, who try to plan and advertise their courses well in advance, should be the first to be informed.

Instead, this significant funding change was to be found in new ‘business rules’ for awarding organisations, like it was perfectly normal and to be expected.

Without FE Week bringing the change to the attention of providers, how long before they would have realised?

The SFS (still not out at the time of going to press) serves to communicate such changes. It cannot come soon enough.

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Funding agency in danger of ‘overload’ warns NAO

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A government investigation into the Education Funding Agency has warned it could become “overloaded” as financial constraints, staffing difficulties and an increased workload take hold.

The National Audit Office has published the findings of its investigation, launched in June last year into whether the agency was “prepared to meet future challenges”.

It said funding and assurance responsibilities along with a host of other new considerations had been transferred to the agency — formed in 2012 — from its predecessors by the Department for Education (DfE).

It also said the agency aimed to reduce administration costs by 14.6 per cent, from £53.6m in 2012-13 to £45.8m in 2015-16.

The report further warned that agency “customers”, including colleges, local authorities and academies, would increase in number by around 50 per cent to almost 12,000 between 2012-13 and 2015-16. But, based on planned staff numbers, the report said, the ratio of customers to each agency staff member could rise from 10:1 to 13:1.

National Audit Office head Amyas Morse said: “Given the agency’s expanding remit and rapidly growing customer base, it must now bring together its existing improvement plans and quickly implement an operating model capable of dealing with the new demands.

“Our experience of similar bodies in other sectors suggests that the agency might otherwise become overloaded, to the detriment of its own performance and risking value for money across the education system.”

The report acknowledged increased closer working between the agency and DfE, and confirmed the agency had “managed operational challenges to meet most of the limited performance indicators it had set”.

But it said it had failed to meet expectations in other areas and called for the agency to produce a “roadmap for change”.

It added that the DfE and the agency needed to, “jointly assess the capacity of the agency before the DfE allocates new responsibilities, to prevent overburdening the agency”.

Public Accounts Committee chair Margaret Hodge told of her concern at the findings of the investigation.

She said: “I fail to see how the agency can reduce costs by 15 per cent while simultane-

ously expecting to see a 50 per cent increase in demand for its services.

“There is a real danger that the agency will simply become overloaded, putting at risk the value for money it achieves from its £51bn of funding.”

A DfE spokesperson told *FE Week*: “We are pleased that the audit office has recognised the good work that the agency has done to meet the challenges of the expansion of its role and the growth in the number of academies.

“The agency has built new systems so it can operate more effectively and oversee a system of financial accountability for academies that is more rigorous than the system for maintained schools.

“The agency has also achieved significant savings for the public purse in school rebuilding programmes — some 35 per cent cheaper than under the previous government.

“We thank the audit office for its detailed report and will consider its recommendations carefully.”

It comes after it was announced that the DfE was facing a second audit office probe — this time into its efforts to increase the participation of 16 to 18-year-olds in education and skills.

FE Week profile

Phil Frier ~ his story

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The interim principal overseeing the break-up of the troubled K College talks to FE Week.

On the office wall of K College principal Phil Frier hangs a picture of Mount Everest.

It’s a reminder of both his gruelling ascent to its base camp last year — 5,364m above sea level — and a comforting metaphor that even the most apparently impossible of challenges can be overcome.

It’s also picture that therefore understandably draws numerous glances from the man at the helm of a debt-ridden, officially-inadequate college.

“The photograph reminds me that whatever the challenge, it can be achieved through teamwork,” he says.

Frier was at the Everest base camp when he received a text message asking him to take over as principal of K College.

The trek had been on his “bucket list” having retired as principal of City College Brighton in 2012. The trip also helped raise money for Brighton students to build a school in Kenya.

It’s hard to imagine the text would have offered a proposition more attractive than completing the life-threatening trek right to the top of Everest.

K College had endured industrial action over redundancy plans for up to 150 posts, and Bill Fearon, who had been at the college for a decade, had quit as principal while staff picketed at college gates.

And to top it all, it was clear finances at the college were not healthy. So much so, it had been subject to a notice of concern from the Skills Funding Agency.

Fortunately, Frier, a grandfather-of-three, has a taste for a challenge.

“I wondered all the way down [from Everest]: ‘Do I really want to do this?’” he says with a laugh.

He agreed, he says, because he felt his 20 years’ experience as a principal in different colleges, “could make a difference”.

“It sounds very self-indulgent really,” says the 62-year-old.

“But that’s what drives you, it’s not about the money or the other stuff, it’s about the feeling... that you can bring your core values to bear on an organisation in crisis.”

One of Frier’s first moves as principal was to concede that the merger between South Kent and West Kent colleges, to form K College, had failed.

The answer now, it seemed, was to break up the college and so a tendering process for the provision and college sites was launched. It proved unsuccessful — the college didn’t sell.

And in the middle of the saga came a visit from Ofsted inspectors. They said the college was inadequate, before FE Commissioner David Collins was sent in. His recommendation the college be given administered status, thereby removing powers

from Frier, was duly enacted by Skills Minister Matthew Hancock.

Yes, it’s fair to say the college has presented a set of pressures comparable to the seemingly impossible challenge of climbing Mount Everest.

“It was enough of a challenge to be able to give a bit of purpose, but when I was doing it I thought: ‘Why didn’t I just go and lie on a beach somewhere for six weeks? Why am I doing this?’” he says of the Everest trek.

“But, having done it, it was one of the best things I think I’ve done.”

And Frier admits to similar thoughts about the challenge of K College.

“It’s been a really tough, but interesting, job,” says Frier.

“I think people who know me would say that I never appear to be under stress, that I always appear fairly relaxed about the way things operate — but I do think being a principal is a stressful job anyway. I think the most important thing is to share the pressures.

“It was a low point for the staff and they felt they had made a really big effort”

“I have always tried to do that... I think the principals who really suffer are the ones who are so competitive they won’t talk to others about what they are going through.”

Frier came to FE through alternative education after getting involved with a children’s guidance clinic while studying politics at York University.

In 1975 he headed south to Lewes, Sussex, when his wife Cathy got a teaching job.

He began working with difficult teenagers in a sixth form college and taught adult education classes, but with four children he had to supplement his income as a taxi driver.

“I would come home from work on Friday and go on the taxis at 7pm until 3am, just to get the cash to support a family, and the same on Sunday evenings,” he says.

“So I spent a lot of time sitting in the taxi thinking: ‘There must be a better way of earning money’.

“I love teaching, and I would like to have remained as a teacher, but the incentive is, financially, to move out — so I moved into a job



Phil Frier in his office at K College. Inset: Frier completes his 2013 trek to Everest Base Camp

as a vice-principal.”

That vice principal job, at Hampshire College in 1989, was followed by a principal role at Park College Eastbourne. From there it was onto executive director at Sussex Downs College, before Frier started at City College Brighton in 2007, where Ofsted handed him a good rating in 2011 in what he thought might be his final inspection.

But he was to play host to inspectors again late last year at K College, and describes the grade four inspection result as “the low point” of his tenure, both for himself and for staff.

The report declared the college inadequate in every headline field, saying “the continued uncertainty over plans for the college’s future existence is severely and adversely affecting the learner experience”.

It did, however, praise Frier and his newly-established leadership team saying they had “stabilised a potentially chaotic situation and sought to restore fragile staff morale, with some success”.

It added: “The interim principal has focused,

rightly, on preparing the college for transition to new ownership while at the same time doing everything possible to ensure that current students benefit from improved provision.”

“We didn’t expect an Ofsted this year because we already knew,” says Frier.

“It was almost that they decided they wanted to make a statement about where the college was, and I think that was very difficult.

“It was a low point for the staff and they felt they had made a really big effort in the course of the last six or seven months to get things right. It was a judgement on the past... the positive bits in it were about the last six months — but it was very difficult to get that message out there.

However, Frier says there have been high points.

“Getting out of the office and talking to students about the experience they are having gives me a real buzz on a daily basis, as does the way the staff have actually come together to try and make this successful,” he says.

The end of the climb is in sight claims Frier, who’s optimistic the college will be split up and handed to new owners by the start of the next academic year — when he’ll be retiring again to tackle the next challenge on the bucket list.

“I want to spend three weeks living in Italy as a local, and go to the University of Sienna to learn Italian,” he says.

“My wife will come out and join me so we can order a decent meal.

“And there’s a cycle challenge fundraiser in Vietnam.”

It seems a quiet retirement isn’t on the horizon just yet.

Comments

Ofsted issues warning over ‘misleading’ tweet

Things must be getting desperate at *FE Week* if this is to be considered a news worthy story, yawn.

I consider it a good thing that the company commissioned their own inspection to raise standards in their provision.

Impressive report too, keep up the good work Bright.

Ella Jones

Ofsted issues warning over ‘misleading’ tweet

Excellent article that exposes the folly of a system where three departments of state have responsibility for one poor young person — DfE, BIS and DWP.

Three ministers barely on speaking terms, a gaggle of ministers of state and junior ministers from various parties, each trying to get their moment in the sun by making announcements whose connection with reality is as fragile as their majorities.

Traineeships are Matthew Hancock’s responsibility and he has fallen far short of meeting them.

Peter Cobrin

Ambitious indy plans raise prospect of new college

I’m sure Neil Bates is on to something when he refuses to take an interest in becoming a ‘GFE’ (am I the only one who links that dreadful term with Alastair Campbell’s ‘bog standard schools?’), but is keen to explore the scope of centres of true vocational specialism, backed by employers. Universities have their specialist research centres: why can’t FE harbour specialist teaching centres?

Iain Mackinnon

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Survey shows employers can’t fill 22pc of vacancies

@RebeccaKCooney
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Nearly a quarter of vacancies in the UK have gone unfilled because of a shortage of much-needed skills, a survey of 91,000 UK employers has revealed.

The Employer Skills Survey, by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), found that 22 per cent of the 655,000 vacancies in the UK remained untaken because employers could not find workers with the right skills.

Within England, the number of skill-shortage vacancies has nearly doubled since 2009, increasing from 63,100 to 124,800.

The survey, made up of 87,572 interviews, taking in 91,000 separate businesses across all UK sectors, found that jobs in skilled trades, management, professional roles, caring, leisure and machine operating were most affected.

Among the skills needed were “oral and written communication, literacy and numeracy skills” — something which seems to have worsened since the last survey in 2011.

Skills Minister Matthew Hancock said: “Employers in some sectors report persistent skills shortages which is why I have been working hard to design a skills system that is rigorous in the training it provides and responsive to the needs of employers.

“With a record number of people in jobs as our economy continues to grow we must have a skilled workforce equipped to work in a modern economy and compete effectively in the global race.”

The 200-page report, published on Thursday, January 30, also revealed that employers found 17 and 18-year-olds recruited from college were more ready for work than those of the same age recruited from school — 66 per cent of employers said school-leavers were well or very well prepared, while almost three quarters (74 per cent) said the same of college leavers.

Policy director Andy Gannon of the 157 Group, said: “The survey results are encouraging, but they demonstrate that all

concerned can do more to boost training and skills levels.

“It is good that the report recognises the increased employability of college leavers, and we know that FE colleges stand ready to work... with employers and their representatives to ensure economic growth through an increasingly skilled workforce.

“In many areas, these relationships are already bearing fruit, and demonstrating the critical importance of colleges in delivering prosperity for all.”

Association of Colleges president Michele Sutton said: “The fact that employers are more positive about colleges leavers than school-leavers demonstrates clearly that gaining the high-quality qualifications colleges offer is the key to making young people more employable.

“The information that employers are reporting an increase in vacancies due to skills shortages is a real concern.

“It is proof that more vocational education is needed — whether alone or alongside academic qualifications — in order to bridge the gap.”

She added: “Colleges already play a key role in working closely with employers in their area to make sure they are providing young people with the right skills for the local jobs market, often through apprenticeships.”

The UKCES report also showed that total employer investment in training staff had fallen by 5 per cent between 2011 and 2013 (from £45.3bn to £42.9bn).

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute for Continuing Adult Learning, said: “This survey reinforces our concerns about handing over the ownership of the entire skills system to employers.

“To have a vibrant and effective skills system that meets the needs of business and wider society, it has to be led by a partnership of employers, learners and Government and must balance their interests.”

“If you step back from this survey and look at other evidence, including our own annual participation survey, this points to the need to stimulate informed demand for learning

Early airing for employer findings at Skills Summit



Marinos Paphitis

Around 150 delegates at the Skills Summit in central London got a preview of the Employer Skills Survey.

Michael Davis, UK Commission for Employment and Skills chief executive, said the survey presented “a mixed picture [with] positive trends, but also significant challenges”.

“All of these challenges need to be better understood and tackled if the UK is to have the skills needed for sustainable recovery,” he said at the event on Tuesday, January 28.

Skills Minister Matthew Hancock was also at the conference, where he announced plans to build a new nuclear

specialist college, while Skills Funding Agency executive director of provider management Marinos Paphitis said staff cuts at his organisation would not affect performance.

The agency announced a restructure late last year, leaving more than 1,000 staff uncertain of their futures



David Hughes

“There will be less of us... We’re going to be smarter, we’re going to do more things centrally, but we are going to have the relationships as well,” said Mr Paphitis.

“What we’re not going to stop doing is intervening where bad things happen. We have now got a systematic approach and we’re not tolerating failure.”



Matthew Hancock

Pics: FE Week

from young people, adults and employers. The only way you can achieve that kind of informed demand and ensure that there are enough people with the right level of skills for a successful economy and an inclusive society is through a partnership of employers, learners, Government and colleges and training providers working together.”

University and College Union general secretary Sally Hunt, of the, said: “More than 60 per cent of the skills shortages identified by employers were ‘technical, practical or job specific’.

“It is often not that people aren’t skilled enough... but that skills need to be applied more effectively.

“It’s vital employers commit to providing necessary training for their existing employees... employers need to invest more, not less, if they want to effectively address their skills deficits.”

Neil Carberry, Confederation of British Industry director for employment and skills, said: “The flip side of faster growth is an

escalating skills crisis.

“While this isn’t surprising, it makes it all the more urgent to close the skills gaps in science, technology, engineering and maths to support the recovery.”

He added that a “sea-change quality of careers advice” would make young people “more aware of the opportunities and

rewards of working in key sectors which face skills shortages.”

The report also found that nearly half of employers across the UK (48%) admit they recruit people with higher levels of skills and knowledge than are required for the job.

Jan Hodges, chief executive of the Edge Foundation, said the high level of skills

shortages combined with issue of some workers being over-qualified for their jobs showed “young people need much better information, advice and guidance, and high quality work experience.”

“They need to know which qualifications and pathways lead to the best prospects,” she said.

Skills shortage presents urgent opportunities for FE sector

The Employer Skills Survey has thrown up some interesting statistics about the state of the UK economy and its hunger for trained workers. Michael Davis looks at the survey in more depth and asks what the findings mean for UK plc.

There’s no questioning the robustness of a survey that interviews more than 90,000 respondents. But like all statistics, the story isn’t so much in what we know; it’s what we think we can surmise.

So what do we think this report tells us about the opportunities and threats facing FE?

Recruitment is increasing. Given recent news about the growth of the economy, it’s no surprise that employment opportunities

are up.

This will obviously provide employers with recruitment challenges. But more interesting will be the shift in mindset employers will need to make — from one which has (understandably) focused on survival to one more which looks to growth, and retaining and attracting talent as part of that.

We know that training is a key



component of the workplace offer, demonstrating the value and ambition of the business, and enabling businesses to differentiate themselves to potential employees.

We also know that what young people want from a job is changing, and working for an ethical, responsible employer which contributes to society is becoming increasingly important.

Colleges have a great opportunity to develop new and lasting relationships with business, helping them build their reputation as a good place to work by supporting them to make training a core component

of their workforce offer.

But skills shortages are also increasing — fast.

The growth in vacancies that can’t be filled because people do not have the required skills has risen twice as quickly as the growth in overall vacancies.

More than one-in-five vacancies is proving difficult to fill for skills reasons, up from one-in-six in 2011.

Colleges (and awarding bodies) that can harness labour market intelligence and work with employers to develop credible courses and curricula will be well placed to develop their offer and fill these skill shortage vacancies.

Workplace training is up — and down. Encouragingly, the proportion of employ-

ers providing training (65 per cent) has remained constant over the last two years, despite the recession.

However, the economic downturn has bought about changes in the nature of investment.

While the proportion of people receiving training has increased over the past two years, the total amount employers invest in training has fallen by £2.5bn.

Employers are becoming more thrifty, often turning to alternative providers and choosing cheaper delivery methods, such as in-house and technology-based training.

The debate about learning technology in FE is well underway and there are pockets of good practice. But in honesty, the FE sec-

tor has a way to go before it can claim to be cutting-edge, so there’s a clear opportunity here.

The value of training is understood. The majority of employers (71 per cent) say they will need to upgrade the skills or knowledge

A sizeable minority of them (42 per cent) want to provide more training. Getting the offer right and taking the complexity out of the system for employers may enable colleges to unlock this latent demand.

Over the coming weeks and months the

prise partnerships and local authorities.

We will also be doing further analysis of the findings and identifying a series of topics for more in-depth analysis.

But like all research, the value lies not in the numbers, but in what you make of them.

By interrogating this data and mashing it with other research, we can expect to gain further insights.

We are committed to making the datasets from this and other research freely accessible via our “LMI for All” tool later this spring. Visit our website — www.ukces.org.uk — for more information on this, or any other aspect of our work.

Michael Davis, chief executive, UK Commission for Employment and Skills

Toughness vs training — the tools of the teaching trade



Former House of Commons Education Select Committee specialist Ben Nicholls is head of policy and communications at London's Newham College. He writes exclusively for *FE Week* every month.

FE colleagues probably have little time to watch TV and, if they do, they may reasonably avoid anything to do with education.

I'm glad, though, that I've found time to watch the start of Tough Young Teachers, a new BBC3 series following six Teach First participants in three of London's more challenging schools.

I'm glad for lots of reasons, not least

because it increases my ever-growing respect for what teaching colleagues across the country do every day. There can't be a more valuable or under-valued job.

I'm glad, also, because it confirms both my fears about, and delight in, education on TV.

Professor Mary Beard, talking about her experiences on Jamie's Dream School in 2012, argued that while the series was "useful", we "have to be very clear that we were dealing with a group of kids and teachers who, in some ways, were fighting for the attention of the TV cameras".

So, while TV education can be highly entertaining, and can both shape and stimulate important debate (as well as raise teachers' status), it cannot ever be the full picture, and we should never pretend it is.

Finally, though, I'm glad because the programme helped me crystallise some of my own puzzled thoughts about teacher training.

Previously, I've felt — and written here — that the profession needs to attract people from all walks of life, with all sorts of skills and backgrounds. But Tough Young Teachers has really brought home that teachers need just as robust training as doctors, firefighters, soldiers, or any other professionals.

I know teachers who found their training pretty useless. I know teachers, too, who refer back to it every day.

These are issues of quality, which

arguably need addressing — but neither scenario negates the importance of training itself.

That importance is summarised by the tough young teacher who declares, after her second lesson: "I don't know what I'm doing."

Learning on the job is important, but it can't be the whole package. Criticising Teach First isn't my purpose here. The scheme has perhaps done more than anything else to encourage people towards teaching who would never have considered it before.

It just needs to give those people some more training — and I can fairly safely say that most Teach First participants, in my experience, agree. Tough Young Teachers comes at a time when the National Union of Students is running its own campaign to ensure that FE teachers still need to qualify — against a government which disagrees, and which already allows the unqualified to teach in Free Schools.

My own college is clear that teachers need to be qualified, and we're glad that our Student Union agrees with the importance of this.

It's a question, though, which is particularly apt in vocational subjects where practical experience is critical for teachers, and highly valued by students.

Proposals being developed by thinktanks and others to facilitate professional

secondments into FE will need to consider this question very carefully.

To return to Dream School, I can do no better than quote student Nana Kwame.

When asked whether subject knowledge or ability to communicate mattered more in a teacher, he responded: "You can't pick between the two — you need someone in the middle, who knows what they're talking about [but] can get along with you".

The House of Commons Education Select Committee robustly defended this position, stating in 2012: "There is no clear formula for an 'outstanding' teacher... although good subject knowledge, overall academic ability and a range of personal and inter-personal skills are vital".

But the committee also argued forcefully that "school-based training is vital in preparing a teacher for their future career".

Six weeks in the summer before Lesson One cannot, with respect to Teach First, ever be enough — and Tough Young Teachers supports that position.

There's no question that the six participants are pretty tough, not to mention a plethora of other superlatives — they just need to be trained as well.

Taking a leaf out of Bridgwater's nuclear skills delivery book

With Skills Minister Matthew Hancock having announced plans for a nuclear college, Mike Robbins looks at whether he should just have been grateful for the existing FE offer and used it as an industry model.

The government has announced proposals to build new specialist colleges to support the skills training required for HS2 and the nuclear industry, but we have seen how an established training institution can evolve, adapt and innovate to deliver the new and bespoke skills required for a major civil engineering project.

The nuclear new build at Hinkley Point C represents a highly-ambitious project of international significance; the proposed construction of two new nuclear reactors will necessitate a workforce of 25,000 across the ten years of the build, and clearly there is insufficient existing capacity within the whole of the South West, let alone Somerset itself.

A major programme of community engagement, skills development and training is clearly required, and with associated infrastructure works that include highways improvements, campus accommodation, park and rides and wharf and jetty improvements, the question is — why build a brand new, purpose-built college as well?

To do so would be to ignore the wealth of experience and expertise already available in the FE sector, particularly when it comes to science, technology, engineering and

maths disciplines.

While close collaboration between industry and the education sector on a project of this magnitude has simply not happened before, the Tier 1 contractors connected with Hinkley C are wholeheartedly embracing the fact that colleges already have the mechanisms in place to respond quickly and flexibly to industry.

“Partnership can lead to significant private investment in facilities within colleges to deliver skills development and training on a huge scale”

This type of partnership can lead to significant private investment in facilities within colleges to deliver skills development and training on a huge scale, and enabling them to continue with their core offer to young people even in the light of reduced government funding.

The impact on the local communities that colleges serve can be substantial — in the case of Hinkley C, for example, one third of the jobs



are intended for people within a 90-minute commute, and the involvement of a coalition of South West colleges has led to aspirations being universally raised.

New ways of working often require new delivery and assessment methods, and the private investment afforded by industry partnerships enables colleges to look far beyond the reaches of traditional classroom delivery.

Realistic working environments for specific construction skills — such as formwork, plant operations, excavating, scaffolding and concrete pouring — can be created using industry-standard plant and equipment, on a scale that simply would not be possible if colleges were wholly reliant traditional funding streams.

And colleges can work together to pool expertise, share facilities and franchise programmes, creating a UK-wide skills base that

will serve industry for decades to come.

An early alliance with major civil engineering projects is not without risk for colleges, particularly in terms of up-front investment, but it can prove to be a very sound strategy. The benefits to colleges and the communities they serve are clear; but the benefits for the projects themselves cannot be underestimated either.

The vast array of skills training required is being placed firmly where it belongs — in the hands of proven experts who have often been recruited from the industries themselves — and early engagement means that the preparatory work has already been completed in readiness for the green light.

It is debateable whether a new college could overcome teething problems and hit the ground running, even assuming practical considerations such as location, planning, recruitment and marketing could be overcome.

It is also worth noting that the eventual employers on major infrastructure schemes come from far and wide, and to focus on a single training provider in a single location would seem inappropriate and inefficient — a widening of opportunity to optimal numbers of people is absolutely key to future success.

We would like to see government maximising the potential of the many excellent colleges that lie along the route from London to Leeds or near the areas where nuclear new build and operations exist.

Mike Robbins, principal, Bridgwater College

Lessons from experience in delivering education for imprisoned young learners

With the government having announced plans for secure colleges for young offenders, Paul Phillips uses his experience of delivering adult prison education to outline the issues that will need consideration.

The whole world of offender learning has faced massive change over the last 18 months with the introduction of the OLASS (Offender Learning and Skills Service) 4 approach.

Essentially, that has enabled a much greater focus to be given to the skills agenda and to ensure that prisoners are equipped with the latest skills and expertise to enable progression to secure work when their sentence is completed.

The transition process has not been easy but the approach taken by the government has been highly necessary.

Most recently, the government announced plans for 'secure colleges'.

At Weston College, we are the offender learning provider for a large number of prisons across the South West and the concept of secure colleges is one that is interesting, but one that also will need great planning for such a model to become successful.

From my perspective as principal, we need to take the lessons from OLASS 4 and look at what has been happening in terms of youth

custody, which is currently generally outside our remit.

The key messages from my perspective are that education has got to be the priority and the qualifications on offer must be those that can lead to sustainable employment or progression to higher levels of study.

It is also imperative that we recognise that many offenders will either have learning disabilities, special educational needs or mental health needs.

“Are the entrepreneurs of the future out there who can create these secure colleges?”

Therefore the funding that follows the prisoners must ensure that they have the additional support for success.

Currently, under OLASS 4 methodologies, albeit for older prisoners, the levels of additional learning support available are significantly below that required.



I believe that there is a key solution which must combine the very best of OLASS 4 methodologies with experts in security.

Both these parameters must have equal priority in planning for the future, but equally the whole concept of youth custody needs re-examination.

If the government is serious about these proposals, then it will need to engage with outstanding learning providers with real expertise in the skills agenda.

Similarly, these providers will need to work with organisations who have proven expertise in security.

This is certainly not an easy proposition, but I believe these providers exist.

Believe from the government, entitled transforming youth custody — putting education at the heart of detention, may be the catalyst that we need in this country.

It clearly needs to be thought out in great detail and then of course there is the cost benefit analysis that will be crucial.

The concept will not be cheap, but, as the green paper states, with average cost per place running from £65,000 to £212,000 per annum and with reoffending rates of at least 70 per cent, change is necessary.

The strategies announced are feasible and to be applauded. I do have a caveat however and that is use the experts from the world of FE and others to influence and support these changes.

Dr Paul Phillips OBE, principal, Weston College, Somerset



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FE Week campus round-up



Catherine Smith (centre) with, from left, Gateshead College catering students Charlotte Ferguson, aged 18, Carl Potts, 25, James Dillon, 31, Aiden Jackson, Tom Allen, both 17, and Anna Kirkby, 18

Commis chef Catherine takes a break from putting on The Ritz

There was nothing half-baked about the good advice an award-winning former catering student gave to the next generation of learners at Gateshead College.

Catherine Smith, who was Gateshead College Student of the Year in 2013, secured the role of pastry commis chef at London’s prestigious Ritz Hotel after passing a level two course in professional cookery in June last year. The 29-year-old showed current catering

students how to make tasty pastry treats during her return to the college. The learners also quizzed her on preparation and cooking techniques, food hygiene, and key attributes needed to impress employers in the hospitality and catering industry.

She said: “It’s amazing to be able to go back to college. If I can help just one person to get a job in these difficult economic times, it will have been worthwhile.”

Jermain delighted to be on will.i.am’s team for The Voice

A former Sir George Monoux College student has been selected to be part of R&B star will.i.am’s team on BBC talent show the Voice.

Jermain Jackman, aged 19, who gained top grades in BTec music at the East London-based college, sang And I Am Telling You by Jennifer Hudson to impress the coaches.

Jermain’s admiration for will.i.am inspired him to audition for the Voice.

He said: “He is one of my favourite artists, so when he was the only coach to turn around for me it felt like fate.”

Louisa Kennedy, course leader of

creative performing arts at the college, said: “Jermain is a very motivated young man and an excellent role model for young people. We are all so proud of him.”

Jermain completed his BTec in July last year, but was presented with the college’s Music Student of the Year Award and the Rising Star Award earlier this month.



Left to right: Jermain Jackman singing on the Voice and, inset left, dressed-up smart for the college ceremony where he was given the Music Student of the Year Award and the Rising Star Award. Above: will.i.am

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who’s new and who’s leaving

A Greater Manchester independent learning provider has appointed a new chief executive.

Julie Robinson (pictured left) has taken the helm at Bolton-based Alliance Learning having risen through the ranks from sales and marketing manager 20 years ago.

She started her career at Gullick Dobson as an office junior before joining Alliance Learning in 1994 as a sales and marketing officer.

Wigan born Ms Robinson graduated through the management structure,

reaching the post of deputy chief executive in 2006.

She saw Alliance achieve a satisfactory, or grade three (renamed requires improvement), Ofsted rating in 2010 under the leadership of Steve Whitehead (pictured right). “Throughout my 20 years at Alliance Learning I have gained extensive knowledge of the organisation and its business,” she said.

“The staff at Alliance Learning are truly outstanding in terms of commitment to their learners and to our organisation and this has recently reflected in our outstanding

success rates of over 90 per cent and being graded as a good provider in all areas of curriculum by the education watchdog in July 2013.

“Alliance Learning has already devised the blueprint which will ensure outstanding inspection results at the next inspection.”

Ms Robinson takes over from previous Alliance chief Mr Whitehead, who left after seven years to become head of education and skills at Blackburn-based Training 2000.

Before that, he spent almost 15 years with

Accrington-based North Lanes Training Group.

Steve Gray, chief executive at Training 2000, said:

“Our company is on a journey of continuous improvement and Steve’s new appointment will allow the company to look into ways to develop our provision, ensuring that we can continue to invest in staff and facilities.

“As an ex-apprentice, Steve will be a great ambassador for young people and will play a key role in promoting the value of apprenticeships to employers.”

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your college or training provider, please let us know by emailing news@feweek.co.uk

From dockyard engineer to OAP author — Ken’s own inspiring story

Pensioner Ken Hall has become a children’s writer after learning to use computers at Sunderland College in his late 70s. The former engineer finished his second course having turned 80 years old and then took up writing, writes Paul Offord.

Grandfather-of-two Ken Hall would daydream about becoming a children’s author while working as an engineer in the rough and ready setting of a Sunderland docks.

His hopes for a different life were thwarted by the lack of a typewriter and the fact he struggled with handwriting.

But, having retired and returned to the classroom at the age of 78, Ken, now aged 89, mastered the word processor and so began his journey to a new career.

He said: “I have a saying that people who believe that they are too old to read a children’s fairy story are very old indeed. “People who believe they are too old to learn new skills are also very old indeed, and I was glad to be able to show that college is not just a place for young people.

“The college courses I completed helped me turn what was a hobby and a lifelong ambition into a reality.”

Ken took a level one computer course at Sunderland College, where he was taught how to use Microsoft packages, including Word and Excel, and also the internet.

He progressed to a level two computer studies course, which he completed before his 81st birthday.

And the Sunderland pensioner has been busy ever since, typing up short stories, novels and poems, which are mostly for children. He also returned to the college recently to thank lecturers.

Some of the first people to hear Ken’s stories were youngsters from Hill View Infant School, in Sunderland, said his 53-year-old daughter, Kris, an information technology lecturer at the college.



She said: “The stories are brilliant. The first one was a short-story called Willie and Patch about a boy and his dog. That ended up as the first chapter of a much longer adventure story, called the Sword and the Shield.

“Another of his books for people of any age, called the Fairest Rose, is about a young woman who was trapped in Germany at the outbreak of the Second World War and became a spy for the British and Americans. Those who have been lucky enough to read proof-copies of the book haven’t been able to put it down.”

Ken, who spent most of his working life



Ken Hall holding a copy of his book, the Fairest Rose. Inset left: Ken and son Tony sitting on a bench by the seaside in Roker, Sunderland, in around 1960 and, right, Ken reading to children at Hill View Infant School

as an engineer at TW Greenwell dry dock, in Sunderland, has now completed two novels, eight shorter children’s stories, and many poems.

Grandson Christopher, 30, has designed a website — www.kenhallbooks.co.uk — to publicise his work.

Do you know of any FE and skills learners older than Ken? Email campus@feweek.co.uk to let us know



Entry level qualifications that start with the learner at the heart of the curriculum.

The OCN Eastern Region Entry level suite has been designed as a coherent framework which:

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- Supports progression
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Jobs



SCAE Education Manager

Remuneration: Commensurate with Experience
Location: Office in Chelmsford but could commute from anywhere in UK

The Speciality Coffee Association of Europe (SCAE) is a trade and consumer association for members, being companies and individuals working in the field of speciality coffee production, preparation and delivery. With members in more than 70 countries around the world who network through SCAE events and online, SCAE has national chapters in 35 countries, meeting the needs of members, working within their own national coffee traditions.

OUR VISION: We are the authority on delivering coffee excellence.
OUR MISSION: To create and inspire excellence in the coffee community through innovation, research, education and communication.

The SCAE Education Manager is a new position. Responsible for brand integrity, strategic advancement and global promotion of SCAE's Coffee Diploma System (CDS), the successful candidate will be progressive, possesses excellent communication skills, be proficient in product management and distribution of educational content and experienced in working with a third party accredited product.

Priorities of this role include leading a team to achieve targeted sales, introducing an elearning programme, achieving world recognised accreditation for CDS and driving an audit initiative to ensure security and integrity of our education programme.

The Coffee Diploma System is a controlled and managed education curriculum, delivered through SCAE's Authorised Trainer network, which is a collective of over 300 certified distribution partners.

To apply, please email david.veal@scae.com
Closing Date: 28th February
www.scae.com

Head of Faculty
Business & Computing

Salary : Circa £46,000

MidKent College is a large and successful College operating on two main campuses serving Medway and Maidstone.

Following the retirement of the current post holder, MidKent College requires a committed, inspirational and enthusiastic leader for our newly created faculty of Business & Computing.

This is an exciting cross-College faculty to lead, with responsibility for shaping the future of our Business and Computing curriculum to meet the needs of industry and higher education. The faculty includes some Art and Media provision which offers the opportunity to develop the creative aspects of computing.

This is an ideal opportunity for a dynamic and progressive individual who would like the challenge of working in an ambitious College and the opportunity to lead a faculty with the potential to be at the cutting edge of curriculum development.

To apply for this position please contact job.applications@midkent.ac.uk for an application pack.

Closing Date Friday 7th February 2014, midday

Interviews will take place on Friday 21st February 2014



Somerset College
Curriculum Area Manager
- Maths and English

£37,979 per annum
Full-time, permanent, 37 hours per week
Based Taunton, Somerset

This critical post will oversee the delivery and development of a wide range of Maths & English qualifications in an innovative and engaging manner, ensuring the successful participation of all key stakeholders, including 14-16 year old students, full-time 16-18 and 19+ students on study programmes, part-time adults, and apprentices.

The post will have a significant impact on the future direction of the Maths & English curriculum within Somerset College and will demonstrate a commitment to ensuring the delivery of these subject areas is of the highest standard across all programmes, as well as playing a key role in developing, training and equipping teachers to deliver existing and planned new provision.

For an application pack, please visit our website:
www.somerset.ac.uk or contact Human Resources on 01823 366 457 or email recruitment@somerset.ac.uk

For further information about the role please contact David Francis, Curriculum Director, on 01823 366410.

Applications can only be considered when submitted on a Somerset College application form.

Closing date: Midday, Friday 14 February 2014

Any person offered a position will be required to complete an enhanced DBS and, if appropriate, barred list check. Somerset College and The Work Academy are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.
Somerset College and The Work Academy are committed to promoting Equality & Diversity. We respect the dignity and worth of each individual.

www.somerset.ac.uk



To advertise with us call
Hannah Smith on
020 81234 778



Skills & Learning Manager

Based in Oxford
Temporary appointment to 31 March 2015
£38,442-£41,148

Ref: XXSLM697S

Applications are invited from experienced managers of Community Learning provision. This is an exciting opportunity to implement Oxfordshire Skills and Learning Service's (OSLS) new community learning strategy, to grow the established class offer, introduce new community-led learning opportunities and work with partner providers to commission provision. You will take forward the work of the Oxfordshire Community Learning Trust by providing strategic leadership of this partnership, which includes all SFA Community Learning-funded providers in the county.

You will lead the team of curriculum staff who make up the Delivery and Commissioning arms of the Community Learning Team and will be part of the service's Senior Leadership team. Duties will include significant cross-service responsibilities, including leadership of the OSLS CL working group and negotiating and monitoring targets for CL-funded provision across OSLS in Social Inclusion and Workforce Development

You should be familiar with the policy agenda contained in 'New Challenges, New Chances' and be able to demonstrate innovative approaches to meeting it which are grounded in successful prior experience.

Closing Date: 12 February 2014
Interview date: 27 February 2014

For further details and information on how to apply, visit <http://jobs.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

We are an equal opportunities employer and we offer generous holidays, development opportunities, a final salary pension scheme and a range of family-friendly policies.

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Can you see ours?



Chief Executive

Up to £150k p.a. (dependent upon experience and performance) + Relocation Package

Nine thousand students. Three FE college locations. An academy, a UTC and a reputation for outstanding delivery: the Lincoln College Group has every reason to be proud. We're keen to build on our achievements by appointing a Chief Executive with clear ambitious vision.

With a strong commitment to delivering excellence and improving the life chances of young people through education, we want to expand our reach and assure continuing success, financial viability and commercial focus in a changing educational landscape.

The Board wishes to appoint a Chief Executive who can develop a shared vision and strategy to deliver sustainable growth and further expansion, diversification and development. The right candidate will bring about change; balance business risk and commercial growth; develop business principles in an educational community; and retain its integrity and moral purpose.

To be considered, you must be a capable ambassador for the College as we'll look to you to network at all levels, including nationally, with regulators and central government. We'll also expect you to have experience of business, industry, leadership and commercial growth, plus the ability to transfer this knowledge to the educational field. Your ability to balance leadership experience with the right values for educational outcomes will be a significant factor in your success.

For more information and how to apply, please visit www.lincolncollegechiefexec.co.uk

If you would like to have a confidential discussion about this role and for any questions about the recruitment process please contact our retained consultants at Penna Executive Search: Maggie Hennessy on 07949 948092 or Julie Towers on 07764 791736.

Closing date: 17 February 2014.



Penna



LCBT is a Specialist Vocational College based in Central London. It was established in 1995 for Beauty, Retail, Holistic and related sectors and remains the largest Beauty Therapy College nationally, widely renowned within the Beauty Industry. LCBT has now expanded to offer a wide range of Employability Training, Apprenticeships and, a range of Health & Fitness and Teacher Training courses.

We have a number of Senior Management Team (SMT) roles that we are looking to recruit. Check out our website at <http://www.lcbt.co.uk/careers/> for further information on the below positions or regarding any other recruitment, or alternatively please send your CV to recruit@lcbt.co.uk or call us on 0207 208 1393.

IT MANAGER c.£45,000

The IT Manager will ensure the streamlined operation of the IT Department in alignment with the College's business objectives. With full budgetary control, line-management responsibilities and management of the IT infrastructure of LCBT, this IT Manager will oversee all the IT related activities and operations of the College, as well as provide administrative direction and support for daily activities of the IT Department.

HEAD OF MIS £45,000 - £50,000

The Head of MIS will possess a thorough understanding of the funding and grants procedures involved and ensure processes are in place to monitor, audit and control compliance with all aspects of the legislation. They will support and provide data collation as requested by the senior management team, responding to the needs of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and external funding providers.

APPRENTICESHIPS MANAGER c.£45,000

The Apprenticeships Manager will work with others inside and outside LCBT to create, develop, implement and maintain a viable Apprenticeship provision. The Apprenticeships Manager will ensure the department meets stringent targets that include enrolment, retention and success measures. The Apprenticeship provision serves a wide variety of different clients in varying sectors.

OUR ADDRESS LCBT, 47 GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET, LONDON. W1F 7JP

GENERAL
MANAGER



Competitive salary plus attractive benefits package
For full details on this great opportunity, please go online to:
www.feweek.co.uk/jobs/view/general-manager/

Any further questions or to apply for the role please contact our executive search consultant **Joe Hansen** at Lime Search:

Closing date: 3rd March 2014

Phone: 020 3058 0672
Email: Joe.Hansen@lime-search.co.uk



Innovation Project Manager

£30,000 - 50,000
Permanent



The Reed NCFE Partnership

The REED NCFE Partnership is currently recruiting an Innovation Project Manager on a permanent basis to help us achieve our ambition that...

'Every year, we will help one million learners prepare for the transition from learning into work'

The focus of the role is to innovate, plan and project manage to ensure the successful development of products and services, primarily by outsourcing development work to a team of external contractors and suppliers. The role will be based at our new office in Longbenton, Newcastle upon Tyne.

If you want to be integral in growing, shaping and innovating REED NCFE then send your CV to **Matt Brown** matthewbrown@reed-ncfe.org.uk

The closing date for this vacancy is : Friday 7 February (midday)

For questions about this role please contact **Matt Brown, HR Officer on 0191 605 3304** or visit our website www.reed.ncfe.org.uk/careers

FE Week

FREE For February

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FE Week Sudoku challenge

	1	5	3		2		8	
			9				4	
	7	8		1	5			
				3		1		5
1								2
2		7		5				
			4	9		3	2	
	4				3			
	2		1		7	4	5	

Difficulty:
EASY

How to play:
Fill in all
blank squares
making sure
that each row,
column and
3 by 3 box
contains the
numbers 1 to 9

Solutions:
Next week

	8	7			5			
						6		2
	4		9	2				1
1			3		6	2		
		6				7		
		9	7		2			8
3				1	8		9	
7		4						
			4			3	2	

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Last Week's solutions

1	6	3	8	4	7	9	5	2
5	2	9	1	3	6	7	4	8
4	8	7	2	9	5	1	6	3
3	4	6	5	8	9	2	1	7
2	7	5	6	1	3	8	9	4
9	1	8	7	2	4	6	3	5
6	3	4	9	7	8	5	2	1
8	5	2	3	6	1	4	7	9
7	9	1	4	5	2	3	8	6

Difficulty:
EASY

9	8	1	6	7	2	3	5	4
4	3	5	9	1	8	6	2	7
7	6	2	3	4	5	9	8	1
5	1	8	4	7	9	2	6	3
3	4	6	1	8	2	5	7	9
2	9	7	5	6	3	1	4	8
1	2	3	7	5	4	8	9	6
8	7	9	2	3	6	4	1	5
6	5	4	8	9	1	7	3	2

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Spot the difference
to WIN an FE Week mug!



Spot five differences. First correct entry wins an FE Week mug. Text your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to 07969 166 374.

Last week's spot the difference winner was Samantha Selbie, from SSVQ in Motherwell.